

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

December 11, 2001

Department of Natural Resources
Room 1060

Minutes

Member Present:

SCHLOTTHAUER, Bill – Water Rights
SOWARDS, Glade - DNR/ADMIN
KIMM, Hardy - UGS
WEST, Paul - UDOT
DANIELS, Ronald - DOGM
DUANE, Mortensen – DERR
CANNING, Michael - DWR
HOPKIN, George – UDAF
PARKER, Randy - UDAF
PITKIN, Jay – DEQ – Water Quality
GEORGESON, Michael – DEQ – Drinking Water

Others Present:

WRIGHT, Carolyn - GOPB/DNR
SMITH, Shelly - BLM
KITCHELL, Kate - BLM
DELOS SANTOS, Annette - BLM
KNOX, Steve – BLM
ERIKSON, Frank – BLM
LANDURETH, Brenda - DNR/ADMIN

I. Approval of November 13, 2001 Minutes

Bill Schlotthauer, the Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m. Kimm Harty made a motion to approve the November 13, 2001 minutes. Ron Daniels seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

II. Special Discussions - BLM Planning Briefing -

Annette Delos Santos, Planning and Resource Coordinator Bureau of Land Management (BLM) introduced the other presenters and they provided a brief overview of their career experience. They described the status of ongoing planning efforts to update resource management plans (RMPs) for Vernal, Richfield and Price. Annette distributed a map of the planning areas in Utah. Some other proposed actions are ongoing efforts.

Two documents Willow Gulch Allotment and Paria Management Plan (Clark Bench Allotment) Environmental Analysis were mailed to RDCC council members last week (#1433). These were prepared in response to an action by Grand Canyon Trust (GCT). GCT purchased a permit or the right to grazing on several allotments through a willing buyer – willing seller process. The permittees relinquished the AUMs. BLM has the responsibility to reallocate the forage for another use or to another permittee. The Environmental Analysis (EA) will determine how these relinquished AUMs will be reallocated.

This is a high priority for the BLM. These planning efforts on a fast track or ambitious schedule, but BLM will also meet the legal requirements of NEPA. It will be a different

process from the typical scoping, Draft EA and comment period, which have all been condensed into one phase. Please review the EA and submit comments on the Planning Criteria. This is a starting point to initiate dialogue and comments. The 30-day comments period ends on January 6, 2002. BLM will return to RDCC for a final review of the EA on approximately January 23, 2002 for the Willow Gulch Allotment. A 30-day comment period will be followed by a decision after RDCC and the Governor's consistency review. Clark Bench Final EA will also follow with a decision.

There are two permittees for Willow Gulch Allotment and it consists of 476 AUMs, GCT has purchased the rights to 442 of these acres. There are two alternatives: 1.) reallocate the AUMs to watershed, riparian and wildlife objectives and reduce conflicts/impacts to recreation and other uses, 2.) no action, which would allow grazing to continue with another permittee.

Clark Bench EA there are three alternatives and one permittee. The three alternatives are: 1.) reallocate the AUMs (12,000 AUMs) to different uses (watershed, riparian, wildlife, etc.), 2.) Paria Wilderness Area would be closed to grazing (AUMs) and would be banked in another part of the allotment (close one-third, which means 881 AUMs would be available) to reduce resource conflicts in other areas or environmental stress in the monument, 3.) no action – all of the AUMs would be reallocated.

The third GCT purchase is the Last Chance Area is along the Escalante River floodplain. Significant operation problems exist for the permittee, recreation conflicts and it is a complex proposal. The intent is to shift where grazing will occur and the purchase will include over 235,000 acres (AUM). The Draft EA will be released on January 14, 2002 and the comment period will close on February 13, 2002. It will include a range of alternatives. The BLM has been working closely with Kane and Garfield Counties and other interest parties. Reducing grazing in the monument is a concern. Reallocating AUMs involves retiring or reallocating forage to other uses or to another permittee.

Bill recommended that the BLM investigate the impacts on local water rights, which could be changed to an instream use through a change application (owned by DWR or DPR) and there may be some legal implications involved. BLM stated that they were not part of the purchase and might not be affected, but that they would include this concern in their analysis.

Some of the land considered in these planning efforts does overlap into the Monument. Actions and outcomes of the EA will require amendments to the Monument Plan in Kanab and Paria Management Plan (#1433).

Annette stated that Vernal Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register on March 12, 2001, Richfield NOI (#1366) was published November 1, 2001 and Price NOI (#1380) was published on November 7, 2001. This launches the formal scoping period. However, comments are welcomed throughout the process. BLM is looking for

opportunities to share and collect existing data. Contact information is listed on the back of the BLM area map. If you have any questions, please call.

Annette offered to develop several options for a field trip for RDCC members to see an on-the-ground perspective of these planning projects.

Frank Erikson, BLM is the planner for Richfield area. Frank provided a Richfield RMP Briefing and map handout to RDCC members. Developing a resource management plan (RMP) for the Richfield Field Office includes public lands in Sanpete, Sevier, Wayne, Piute and the eastern part of Garfield counties. This effort consists of two separate sets of issues for 2.2 million acres of federal land. Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976) states that public lands are periodically inventoried for present and future use through a land use planning process. Existing plans (five plans) are now outdated because public use, public values and laws have changed. New issues such as ATV use and wilderness designation are important to the public. BLM is planning to conduct public outreach, scooping and gathering information during 2002. BLM will have a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Draft RMP by 2003. There will be a 90-day public comment period followed by a comment analysis. BLM hopes to complete the entire planning process by the end of 2004 with a Final EIS. BLM will write the proposed plan, then a protest period and a 60-day consistency review at the Governor's office. RMP provides a broad scale direction for resource management and will also make some final decisions, such as 1.) identify areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC) such as pristine areas, toxic waste area, etc., 2.) OHV areas (open, closed or limited on designated routes), 3.) review new information on wilderness study areas (existing wilderness will not be changed until it is resolved by Congress), 4.) wild and scenic rivers recommendations, 5.) hazardous fuels, 6.) grazing and AUM standards, 7.) visual resource management and 8.) fire management and hazardous fuel reduction. The RMP process will result in standards and information to support recommendations for Congress' consideration. BLM will involve the public early and often (NEPA) and involve state, local government, tribes and other stakeholders throughout the entire planning process. Frank handed out the Federal Register announcement that initiated the process and there is an important change under the public participation section 60-day comment period has been changed to extend the scoping process to April 1, 2002 for Price and Richfield planning efforts. This change will be announced in the Federal Register and newsletters. On March 1, 2002, BLM will initiate formal planning meetings with the county seats and will come to Salt Lake City area and will also go out to any one else that is interested in meeting. Major issues identified in the announcement include: 1.) management and protection of public land resources, 2.) access to and transportation on public lands, 3.) wilderness study area recommendations, 4.) OHV, 5.) balanced and multiple uses 6.) coal and oil and gas issues will be addressed. These issues may change based on public input received during the planning process. BLM will develop objective planning criteria (preliminary planning criteria are listed in the Federal Register handout), which will be used to measure alternatives, comments and other proposals against. Planning efforts will focus on local communities, but will also extend out

to other areas in Utah where people are interested in participating in the process and that may have an interest in the issues.

BLM has identified a list of tasks that the contractor and BLM can do. Assignments will be based on the process, available staff and funding availability. If additional funding becomes available or the schedule becomes condensed there might be a need to utilize the contractor more frequently. The contractor has some good and broad expertise, analysis skills, can provide a second opinion and better understanding of the big picture. The BLM can offer technical expertise, good understanding of the resources and is well connected to the local community.

Major issues in the Price area include 1.) Nine Mile Canyon and San Rafael Swell management, 2.) oil and coal bed methane development, 3.) identification of forage allocation based on competition with deer and elk, 4.) OHV use, and 5.) cultural resources.

BLM presented the RDCC members with BLM Commemorative pins that represent involvement in the Olympics in Utah.

Bill made a comment regarding water rights and their permitted use. When management practices change sometimes the water right is left behind resulting in a non-use issue. Water rights that are extractive have a recognized value compared to other existing rights, which may include state generated water rights. Water users and the Division of Water Rights would appreciate it if the planning process would include this concern.

Quitcupah Creek Road EIS (#1422) is currently out for review involves an existing coal mine (SUFCO) near Fish Lake National Forest above Salina Canyon proposal. The mine has acquired contracts to the east to supply the power plants in Emery County. The existing route is a big loop down from the mine down I-70 up state road 10. The Sevier County has proposed to build a new haul road to the Huntington power plant that would cross Quitcupah Creek. The canyon has some natural character and is an important spiritual area to Hopi and Piute due to existing cultural resources including rock art. Three alternatives were discussed which would create a short cut, nine miles over Quitcupah Creek that would cut off 50 miles off of the existing two-way haul route which: 1.) would direct the road down the creek, 2.) would leave the creek and goes up onto a steep grade bench, and the 3.) no action alternative. The very steep grade route alternative would avoid cultural resources, but would be difficultly to engineer and costly to construct. The Sevier County Commissioners gave a presentation to the Leadership Team to request a quick review of any issues related to resource management or any other concerns related to this road EIS.

Shelly stated that Hugh Thompson, John Harja, Sally Wisely and others from DNR and BLM recently held a meeting to discuss ways that DNR could become a cooperating agency. This would allow for sharing expertise and data plus help identify local concerns

and issues. The group decided that the framework used in the Wild and Scenic River Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be a good instrument to organize and facilitate this coordination. BLM will prepare a draft MOU for review by January. Please contact the BLM if you have any questions.

Annette announced that there is a problem accessing the Internet and using electronic mail due to security issues related to Indian trust data. She mentioned that an electronic newsletter (E-Briefs) is available if anyone would be interested in subscribing for the mailing list or you may also subscribe directly on the website.

III. Letter of Permission (LOP) Procedure – Nancy Kang (COE) was not present.

IV. Report from Agencies on Any Anticipated Projects

Bill announced that the Logan City Wetlands Development (#1426) comments are due on Friday, December 14, 2001 to Thomas Brill and Glade Sowards. Glade announced that it would be more efficient if DNR agencies would send an email if they do not have any comments for coordination. DNR will be revisiting the role of Carolyn Wright, John Harja, Thomas Brill and Glade. REMINDER - Please send high priority comments for DNR coordination to DNR Administration and make sure to courtesy copy Carolyn Wright. Current priority items include Logan City Wetlands and grazing allotments (Clark and Willow Gulch). RDCC will also have an opportunity to review these priority items.

V. Review of Proposed Items as Listed on the Project Management Library

No discussion at this time.

VI. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on January 8, 2002 at 9:00 a.m.